

Emil Bach House  
7415 North Sheridan Road  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1088

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIG,  
83-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings*

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
801 - 19th Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C.

## EMIL BACH HOUSE

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ILL,  
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83-

Location: 7415 North Sheridan Road, Chicago, Cook County,  
Illinois.

Present Owner: Joseph Blinder.

Present Use: Single-family dwelling.

Statement of Significance: This is one of the few houses in the Chicago area done by Frank Lloyd Wright after returning from Europe in 1911 and before going to Japan to supervise the work on the Imperial Hotel. It is a late modification of the "Fireproof House" design published in the Ladies Home Journal in 1906 and is an example of the architect's attempt to "destroy the box."

PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of property: Lot 6 of Block 11, a re-subdivision of Blocks 11 and 12 of Birchwood Beach, a subdivision of a part of section 29, township 41 north, range 14 east, lying south of Indian Boundary Line (recorded May 3, 1892 - Document #1656551).

The following is based on the chain of title recorded in book 593-B, page 223 in the Cook County Recorder's Office (Recorder of Deeds):

The property was purchased by Emil Bach and wife from Amelia Ludwick and husband on December 5, 1914 (Document #5545943). The property was sold by the Bachs to Joseph Peacock in April, 1934 (Document #631756T) who in turn sold it to V. H. James and wife in May, 1947 (Document #1148695T) and who in turn sold it to M. G. Speisman in January, 1951 (Document #1336034T), and who in turn transferred the property to Manuel Weiss in December, 1951 (Document #1381597). In June, 1959, the present owner, Joseph Blinder purchased the property from Weiss (Document #1868486).

2. Date of erection: 1915.
3. Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright.

4. Builders, suppliers, etc.: Unknown.
5. Original plans and construction: The original drawings of the house are in the archives of the Taliesin Fellowship, Scottsdale, Arizona. A set of prints is in the possession of the present owner. Photocopies of these drawings are included in this photodata file. No original building permit is recorded in the building permit files. The house was a modification of the cubic "Fireproof House" designed by Wright in 1906 for the Ladies Home Journal. A wing originally containing a porch and sun terrace extended to the rear (east) of the house, and the bedrooms located on the second floor overhung the exterior walls of the first floor living/dining/kitchen space. The lower walls were tawny brick, and the upper floor overhanging walls and soffits were a cream colored stucco with dark brown wooden trim. There is a basement under the main, square block of the house.
6. No alterations are recorded specifically in the Building Permit files; however, see Architectural Information for a description of several modifications.

B. Historical Events and People Connected with the Structure:

Emil Bach was one of four brothers who owned and operated the Bach Brick Company. A second of these brothers, Otto, had purchased the Oscar Steffens house at 7631 Sheridan Road in 1912 (HABS No. ILL-1063; 2 photos).

(See the copies of two letters received by the current owners from Mrs. Anna M. Bach, widow of Emil Bach, in Supplementary Material.)

C. Bibliography:

Hitchcock, Henry-Russell. In the Nature of Materials - The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright, 1887-1941. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1942. pp. 121, 201, 202.

Kaufmann, Edgar and Raeburn, Ben. Frank Lloyd Wright: Writings and Buildings. New York: Meridian Books, 1960. p. 341.

Wijdeveld, T. J. The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright (The Great Wendigen Edition). New York: Horizon Press Facsimile Re-Issue, 1965. p. 53.

Wright, Frank Lloyd. An American Architecture. New York: Horizon Press, 1955. p. 79.

D. Supplementary Material:

1.

"1353 N. Broadway  
Santa Ana, Calif.  
Feb. 3, 1961

Dear Mr. Blinder:

Your letter of Jun. 28th was received and read with great interest and mixed feelings "the main one being one of pleasure because you are bringing the old home back to its original beauty and enjoying the challenge it presents, for I feel sure there was much to be done.

I am amused at the stories people tell about which they know nothing! Where do they get their information I wonder? First; the "Bach Home" as you called it was never built as a summer home; from the first interview with Mr. Wright to the final finished work it was planned and built for a permanent home and a thing of beauty. It never cost anywhere near \$100,000 or we would never have owned it. Second; It is highly probable that at some time the lake did exist as far west as Western Ave. but certainly not during our time for when we bought the lot from Mr. Enpelding there were five large beautiful oak trees on it and they had been there many, many years and were still there when we sold the place to Mr. & Mrs. Hicock in 1935. To my knowledge the lake never even washed up on the east end of Jarvis Ave.

Third; About the garage, we first had a portable metal one and used it until we were able to build the brick one to match the brick in the house and wall constructions.

Fourth; Yes Mr. Bach was one of the first brick manufacturers in Chicago, having been in the work from childhood. It was first "Wm. Bach & Sons" and later "The Bach Brick Co." During the years they owned four different yards all in Chicago and on the North side. Fifth;--I know nothing about the furniture which was built in and for the house. No, Mr. Bach and Mr. Wright were not personal friends - just through business.

This letter is long and rambling but I hope understandable.

Sincerely,  
Mrs. Anna M. Bach"

2.

"1333 N. Broadway  
Santa Ana, Calif.  
Feb. 14, 1961

Dear Mr. Blinder:

It would be useless for me to even try to tell you the joy I received from your letter of Feb. 6, '61 wherein you told in detail of the restoring of your home to its former beauty. I think of several things you will be interested to know about; the wood trim and furniture throughout the house, the original color of the walls and the unusual light fixtures.

All of the wood and furniture was all black walnut, left in its natural color without any stain and waxed to a perfectly satin finish. When the house was being built the first world war had started and all black walnut was taken over by the government for gun stacks. At last Mr. Wright located some huge beams that had been used in a barn for supports, had them taken to a mill and sawed to fit the needs for which he planned them. (it delayed the finishing of the home for many months and in the meantime the interesting? story was circulated that Mr. Bach had run out of funds and could not complete the building) I believe the flooring is birch.

The original color of the walls was one of Mr. Wright's own choosing and mixing and he called it "Sunshine". we were never able to get a painter who could get it exactly right but it was simply beautiful with the rich brown satin of the wood work!!

The light fixtures were so very different from any that were ever even thought of that I'm sure they were torn out long ago.

Your two trees will grow tall, never fear, and you will enjoy them much.

Thank you letters and I wish for you and your family good luck and great happiness.

Sincerely,  
Mrs. Anna M. Bach"

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A late modification of the 1906 Ladies Home Journal "Fireproof House" design.

2. Condition of fabric: Excellent (the present owner has made a number of alterations to fit his use of the house. He has attempted to make these within the Wright idiom and where possible has gone to a great deal of effort to restore many features and details of the house.)

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Irregular rectangle; 40'-8" x 58'-0"; two stories.
2. Wall construction, finish and color: Dark, tawny-colored standard brick on porch, first floor and retaining walls. Cream colored plaster with dark brown wooden trim on second floor. Lintels, sills, water tables and capstones originally concrete. Capstones now replaced with limestone.
3. Structural framing: Wall Bearing.
4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: A screened porch with sun terrace above is at rear (east) of house. The porch is now enclosed; the sun terrace is roofed and enclosed.
5. Chimneys: There is a large central chimney in the center of the house.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance door is on the east side of the southeast corner of the building. The service entrance is on the north wall at the northeast corner of the building.
  - b. Windows: First floor windows are casement with a single glass pane. Second floor windows are casement with leaded glass design.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Flat, built-up.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: Wide overhang with plaster soffit and wooden fascia.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:
  - a. Basement: Full basement with Mechanical equipment, laundry, and storage rooms.

- b. First floor: The living and dining rooms lie across the west end and on the south side, the kitchen is in the northeast corner, the main entry is at the southeast corner. The stairwell to the second floor and basement is to the northeast between the kitchen and service entrance. The porch projects to the east.
  - c. Second floor: There are four bedrooms and a bathroom on the second floor. The southeast bedroom has been remodeled into a second bath.
- 2. Stairways: Stairs are located on the east side of the house. Stairway to second floor is open except for balustrade from first floor to intermediate landing. Stairway to basement is enclosed.
  - 3. Flooring: 2- $\frac{1}{2}$ " birch strip flooring was used throughout the house with 4" x 4" tiles on the entry floor. Carpet now covers the wooden flooring in all areas except entry, kitchen, and baths. Kitchen and baths are covered with ceramic tile.
  - 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Cream-colored sand plaster with black walnut trim which has been waxed.
  - 5. Doorways and doors: Black walnut doors and doorways. Door trim is composed of simple rectangular mouldings.
  - 6. Lighting: Electrical: The original fixtures, which were designed by the architect, have been replaced with new fixtures.
  - 7. Heating: Central.
- D. Site and Surroundings:
- 1. General setting and orientation: The house faces west on Sheridan Road in a neighborhood which has progressively seen the removal of single-family dwellings in favor of high-rise apartment structures. The area is of a very high caliber.
  - 2. Outbuildings: A garage is located on the site at the northeast corner of the property and is built of the same brick as the house. A small storage shed has been added at the north side of the house near the service entrance.
  - 3. Landscaping and walks: There is a concrete ramp at the north side of the building which leads to the service entrance. A walk at the south edge of the original property line leads to a set of steps which carry to the entrance level (approx. 3'-0" above the level of the public

sidewalk). A walk leads east from the top of these steps to a walk running north and south which leads north to the entrance. Next to this north-south walk is a brick screen wall with a repeated wooden pattern in rectangular form atop the concrete capstone. Behind this screen wall is a private garden with extensive foliage. To the south of the original property line is a lawn area. This addition to the property is the result of the present owners desire to prohibit the encroachment of any new structure upon the house, hence his purchase and demolition of the structure on this new property.

Prepared by J. William Rudd  
Supervisory Architect  
National Park Service  
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